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Sarah Bush Lincoln

The Beloved Foster Mother

of

Abraham Lincoln

A Memorial

Elizabethtown Woman's Club

Elizabethtown, Kentucky

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Elizabethtown Woman's Club

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Foreword



THE purpose of this brochure is to preserve a valuable item of history relative to the foster mother of Abraham Lincoln, and to establish as a fact data that might become traditional. A further desire on the part of the compilers, is to present to the public a descriptive booklet that will allow them to appreciate the significance of a bronze tablet to be erected to the memory of Sarah Bush Lincoln, at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, contemporaneous with the publication of the work in hand.

The memorial, which will stand on the courthouse square, will consist of a bronze tablet placed on a limestone base. This piece of limestone has been taken from the Mill Creek farm, where Thomas Lincoln lived in 1803 and which he purchased on September second of the same year. This memorial constructed by the Elizabethtown Woman's Club is made possible by a gift for this purpose from Dr. William Allen Pusey of Chicago.

A feature of this booklet is the reproduction of a photographic copy of the Thomas Lincoln Marriage Bond, the original document being filed in the Hardin County Court House. It contains the signature of Thomas Lincoln, father of the President. A picture of the old cabin, in which the wedding took place, is also presented, taken while the building was in the process of demolition. Mr. Squire Bush, an own nephew of Sarah Bush Lincoln, and the last one of his generation, is seen in the foreground of the picture. Mr. Bush's affidavit affirms the authenticity of this picture.

While this old building was being razed, Rev. Louis A. Warren, an authority on the Kentucky history of the Lincolns, purchased the roof containing the original wooden pegs, and has since presented it to the Elizabethtown Woman's Club. This roof has been worked into attractive souvenirs, and may be purchased from the committee whose names appear at the close of this foreword.

MISS L. C. GOLDNAMER
MISS MARGARET STEWART
MISS LUCY T. ROBERTSON
MISS LENA JOHNSON

MRS. L. A. WARREN
MRS. R. B. PARK
MRS. J. R. SELBY
MRS. W. A. PUSEY

Historical Committee, Elizabethtown Woman's Club



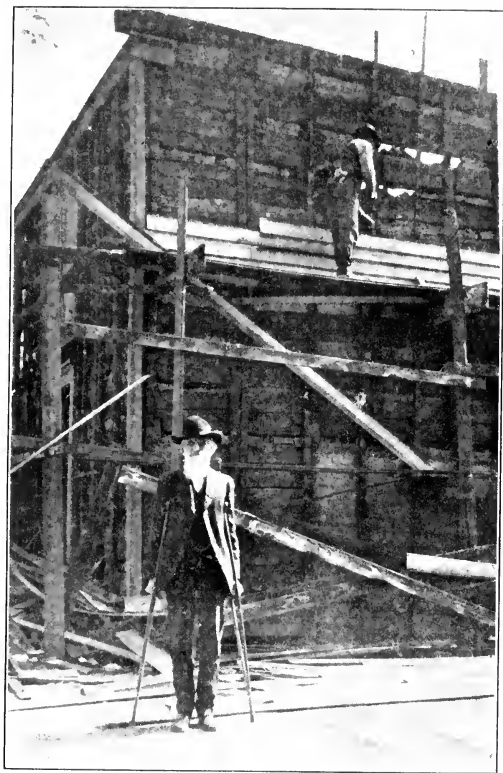
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Mr. Squire Bush in Front of Old Cabin

Last Lincoln Landmark

Louis Austin Warren



THE last old landmark which connects the Lincoln family with Hardin County, Kentucky, has recently been razed at Elizabethtown, to make room for a more modern structure. Under this cabin roof on December second, eighteen hundred and nineteen, Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham Lincoln, married his second wife, Mrs. Sarah Bush Johnston, who was to divide honors with Nancy Hanks Lincoln in bringing up the world's foremost citizen. The removal of the old residence has called to mind the second romance of Thomas Lincoln, which tradition suggests was but the renewal of an earlier courtship abruptly interrupted by the admiration of Lincoln for a Miss Nancy Hanks, whom he married on June 12, 1806, in Washington County.

After the death of Lincoln's first wife on October 5, 1818, he tried as best he could to make a home for his motherless children, Sarah and Abraham, aged eleven and nine, respectively. He continued this effort to maintain home life for more than a year, when he resolved to return to Kentucky with the determination to win the favor of his old sweetheart, whose husband, Daniel Johnston, jailer of Hardin County, had died three years previous, leaving her with three children. The success of his suit is recorded by the marriage certificate on file in the Hardin County Court House. This certificate was thought to have been lost, as it had not been seen for years, but it was recently discovered by the writer and photographed for this booklet.

Rev. George L. Rogers, a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, performed the ceremony that united the widower and the widow, which together with the two sets of orphan children, were to create a new home environment, that grew a President and made Sarah Lincoln the most famous stepmother in all the world. The influence which this new mother exerted over the boy Abraham can hardly be estimated, but history records the fact that the affection which she bestowed upon the children of Thomas Lincoln was not less than her love for her own.

The old building recently razed, in which this wedding took place, has a history of more than local interest. The half acre lot on which it stood, grew the timber which was used in its construction. While the structure acquired several additions during its life of more than a century the original cabin built in 1798 was the last part of the building to fall under the wrecker's bar. In 1806 Samuel Patton, who owned the cabin, erected a brick chimney, and placed in the basework the inscription, "S. P. 1806." Improvements which had kept the house in modern appearance, had hid from view this old inscription for more than half a century, and Elizabethtown did not realize that its oldest building was being demolished until workmen discovered the date which established its antiquity.

Many families of distinction in Kentucky have occupied the residence. The Pirtles, living there as early as 1800, have been well known educators, clergymen and lawyers, a descendant of this same family being superintendent of the public schools of Elizabethtown at this time. General Duff Green, who occupied the house in 1814 while teaching school in the town, became a close friend and advisor of General Jackson, President of the United States, and had much to do with the conduct of the administration, later becoming a congressman. He married a sister of Governor Ninian Edwards. Many professional men lived in the conveniently located house, and it was occupied by tenants up until a few days before its demolition.

Next to this recently cleared site stands another old building, in which the last survivor of the immediate Bush family, still conducts a law office. Mr. Squire H. Bush, although in his 84th year, is at his office every day, and while he needs the assistance of crutches in moving about, his mind is still active. Mr. Bush is a nephew of Sarah Bush Lincoln, the youngest son of Mrs. Lincoln's youngest brother, Christopher Bush, Jr. While Mrs. Lincoln never returned to Kentucky after her marriage to Thomas Lincoln, her brother, Christopher, visited her in her Illinois home, and his children grew up to admire their "Aunt Sally" who mothered President Lincoln.

The affidavit of Mr. Squire H. Bush, which follows, gives the most interesting feature of Thomas Lincoln's second Kentucky courtship:

Affidavit of S. H. Bush

The affiant, Mr. S. H. BUSH, after being duly sworn upon his oath, states: "My name is SQUIRE H. BUSH. I was born in Hardin County September 30, 1837, and, with the exception of eight years residence at Hodgenville, I have lived in Hardin County all my life. My father's name was Christopher Bush, Jr., who was one of a family of nine children, and an own brother of Sarah Bush Johnston, who later married Thomas Lincoln, father of President Lincoln."

The affiant further states: "The marriage bond which was issued to Thomas Lincoln and Sarah Bush Johnston was signed by Thomas Lincoln and my father. My 'Aunt Sally' never returned to Kentucky after her marriage to Thomas Lincoln, but my father visited her in their home in Illinois. I have often heard my father tell the story how Thomas Lincoln won the hand of my 'Aunt Sally.' When he came to Elizabethtown from Indiana to see her, he told her that they had known each other for a long time and had both lost their partners, and asked her to marry him. She told him that she could not just then, and when asked the reason why replied, that she owed a few small debts which she must pay. Thomas Lincoln asked her how much they were, and after learning, went out and paid off each one of them and then they were married."

Affiant further states: "I am now the only surviving member of a family of twelve children. After serving in the Confederate Army I began the practice of law. My office is in the building next to the one in which Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Bush Johnston, which was built in 1803, and has recently been torn down."

S. H. Bush
Nephew

Subscribed and sworn to by S. H. Bush this December 1, 1921.

JOHN G. GARDNER,

Notary Public, Hardin County, Ky.

My commission expires January 14, 1922.



